

Gender and religious discrimination in islamic countries



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

ANTHROPOLOGY: CONFLICT AND CULTURE

Introduction

Some of the vices of the society that were supposed to have been done away with ages ago are still so pronounced in the society today. There are some controversial cultural practices that continue to thrive even in this 21st century though have been passed by time: such includes the discrimination of the minority in the society. It's expected that with the development emanating from advanced science and technology, men should have developed parallel with technological advance hence overlook some destructive cultural practices based on myths proven scientifically to be wrong. This is not the case as religious and gender discriminations continue to deepen its roots in many cultures especially among the Muslims. This paper endeavors to unveil the evils of minority discrimination based on religious laws. The minority discussed in this paper are the religious and gender based in Islamic nations using a case study of Saudi Arabia. This study is based on a thesis statement that discrimination based on Religion and gender is pronounced and in continuity in Islamic based nations. The religious cultures are the sources of the controversies and minority discriminations.

Discrimination

The concept of discrimination has triggered much reaction in the society we live today because the adverse effects it has on the victims. Discrimination is the treatment taken against an individual or a group of people and based on category or class (Benton, 2007). According to the United Nations, discriminatory behaviors may take a variety of forms but all having a

common factor: they include some form of rejection or exclusion. Any action that treats a group of people in an unfair manner because of their membership to a particular social group is discrimination (United Nations Cyber School-Bus, 2010).

Minorities and Discrimination

The minorities in the society are a group of people who do not constitute formulate the dominant majority of the total population in a given society. Minority group does not necessarily mean numerical majority, rather may include any group of people considered subnormal in relation to the dominant group of people in terms of wealth, employment, class, political power, education and social status (Traiman, 2006). The minority may also be referred to as the ‘ subordinate group’ while the majority group may be referred as the ‘ dominant group’ instead of minority and majority respectively. The term minority group is mostly used in reference of an ethnic group which may include: nationality, language, religion, gender and culture. Some other minority groups may include: The working minorities (unemployed and working poor, people with disabilities, age minorities who are older or younger than the typical working class and the sexual minorities (Lovelace, 2006).

The commonality of the term ‘ minority group’ is manifest alongside the discourse of collective rights and civil rights gaining prominence from the 20th century. Those who fall under the category of the minority group frequently fall prey to different treatments in the societies and the countries where they reside. The discrimination can be based on the individuals perception as belonging to the minority group failing to notice an individuals <https://assignbuster.com/gender-and-religious-discrimination-in-islamic-countries/>

personal successes or occur indirectly based on the social structures that do not offer equal opportunities to the entire subject. Those who belong to the categories of the minority groups are often identifiable while tabling of complains of maltreatments and demanding for equal rights (Lovelace, 2006).

Religious Discrimination: Saudi Arabia case study

The focus of this paper is to look into the minority groups in the Islamic nations and how they are discriminated by the society and the governing laws within their nations. The two major categories of minority groups within the Islamic culture are the religious minority and gender minority: women.

One of the most established Islamic states of the world is Saudi Arabia; though our focus is the Islamic culture in general most of the examples shall be obtained from the monarchy of Saudi Arabia. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia is governed by Sharia laws that are derived from the Holy Quran. The kingdom has no legal protection in relation to freedom of religion hence no authority offers such protection to the minority groups: those who do not profess the Islamic religion such as the Christians and the Buddhists. The requirement of the Sharia law is that all people should be Muslims. The government does not condone a public practice of non-Muslim religions, in fact it's illegal. The non-Muslims are only allowed to conduct their worship in private. Nevertheless those limited rights are not always respected and contravention does not necessarily carry a lot of weight (International Labor Office, 2007).

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a population of about seventeen million with about seven million foreigners. The foreign population includes about 36, 000 Americans, 40, 000 Eritreans, 130, 000 Sri Lankans, 150, 000 Lebanese, 250, 000 Palestinians, 800, 000 Filipinos, 800, 000 Egyptians, 900, 000 Pakistanis, 1 million Bangladeshis, and 1. 5 million Indians. Of the entire population in the Saudi society, the majority are Muslims with minority Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, and Jews. There are very few of the foreigners who are Muslims. There is a high degree of cultural homogeneity as well as high social stratification (Federal Research Division, 2004).

The freedom of religion does not exist, Islamism being the official religion; all the citizens are required to be Muslims. The government is an Islamic monarchy declaring Prophet Muhammad's Sunna traditions to be the governing constitution. The government is fully conservative observing the precepts of the Quran to govern the country. The government as well as the society do not allow for any separation between the government and religion. The Muslims societies are allowed to adjudicate their legal issues using the Shi'a Muslims traditions. This is at the expense of the minority groups who are not Muslims since they are judged according to the Muslims laws: this becomes unfair since the non Muslims are not versed with the basic knowledge hence may contravene the laws out of ignorance. On the same note the non Muslims do not enjoy the Christian festivals and holidays since the only permissible public holiday is Eids, Eid Al-Fitr done as a wrapping up of Hajj (International Labor Office, 2007).

The religious minority suffers in that the system of education is based on the Islamic laws. Some other religious teachings such as Christian religious <https://assignbuster.com/gender-and-religious-discrimination-in-islamic-countries/>

Education are not provided for, the parents and guardians have to organize for tutorial classes to teach their children the basics of their religions. Those who have attempted to advocate for some forms of democratic systems or criticized or written opposed the Islamic administration have faced the Sharia law some being imprisoned while others have faced reprisals. The minority groups pay the revenues to the government which is used in the establishment of Mosques. The government also uses collected revenues to pay the Imams who are the prayer leaders and the other mosque employees though it does not permit the establishment of churches (Abir, 1993).

The jurisdiction in the legal system treats the majority, Muslims, unequally to the minority: other religions. For example the retribution sort for blood money varies from that of a Muslim man from that of a member of the other religions. The blood money payable to a Christian man is half that of a Muslim man. The members of the other religions are valued 1/16th of a Muslim man (Saudi Arabian Government and Law).

Gender Discrimination

The acuity of the womenfolk as a minority group facing discrimination has been publicly debated from time immemorial. The concept of gender discrimination is based on belief that women are a lesser sex in the society. It's generally propagated by attitudes and beliefs concerning the gender of a person. The attitudes and beliefs are social nature normally not carrying legal consequences. The treatment of women varies from one society to another and from institution to another (Tofilon, 2005). The advance in development continues to provide for more opportunities for women. Though not many societies have managed to achieve a level of equal rights for all

<https://assignbuster.com/gender-and-religious-discrimination-in-islamic-countries/>

people despite of their gender, the Islamic based countries do not even make the initiative to provide equal opportunities for all. Gender discrimination can arise in different settings. The discrimination may involve an employee being asked some discriminatory questions in job interviews or while working: if a woman presents herself as a Chief Executive Officer of a given company others may doubt her ability to run such a position based on cultural beliefs that a woman ought to take less task positions not such which involves the control off the entire company. Such cultural beliefs have been impacted on women to an extent that some have accepted the position as a reality of life. Unfair discrimination of women follows gender stereotypes that are held by the society (Hyde, 2005).

Gender Discrimination in Saudi Arabia

The discrimination of women as the ' minority group' is most pronounced among the practitioners of Islamic religion though also very evident in other societies such as in America: it was identified that more than half of the masters degree programs are offered to women though this is not reflected in the management of organizations; over 95% of senior management positions in organizations remain occupied by men (U. S. Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia gender discrimination is so pronounced in almost all circles. The greatest challenge in pursuit of gender equality in this monarchy is faced owing to the fact that not many including the womenfolk are willing to see change; many are contented with the status quo. This is chiefly because the discriminations are not perceived by the women since it's based on the laws of God: Sharia from the Holy

Quran, to them God ordained men to rule as women serve the men (Kline, 2005).

Despite the fact that about seventy percent of those enrolled in universities are women only five percent of the workforce is composed of women, 95% of workers are men. This ratio is the most unusual in the world. Any attempt to increase women's opportunities in the working force has faced pronounced resistance from without the government (men citizenly and religious police) and within the labor ministry. The position of a woman is at home according to the Saudi people's cultures and Islamic religion. Most of these cultures state that a woman was created to take care of her husband and family. The segregation for this minority group is continued even to the home settings where there are some special doors that are set men's usage. In Saudi Arabia women are prohibited even from driving cars and those who drive do it out of contravention of the law, they are very few for not many husbands would allow their wives to drive. They are allowed to fly aircrafts but have to be chauffer driven to the airstrips (Kline, 2005).

Women in Saudi Arabia are not even allowed to contend for political positions. They are just allowed to vote. The discrimination of women among the Islamic nations is not only manifest in Saudi Arabia, in Iran there is no much difference; there are so many rights that women are denied from accessing based on the Islamic religion. If a Muslim man commits adultery with a Muslim woman he receives a penalty of 100 lashes, but if with a non-Muslim woman there is no provision of the punishment involved. If a non-Muslim man commits adultery with a Muslim woman the penalty is death sentence. Iran law allows a Muslim man to marry a Muslim woman but a <https://assignbuster.com/gender-and-religious-discrimination-in-islamic-countries/>

Muslim woman can never be married to a non-Muslim man (FIDH report, 2003).

Conclusion

The discrimination of people in today's society based on beliefs and practices that can not be proven has received vast criticism from many circles. With the current advance in scientific and technological advance it's expected that most of the cultural myths that continue to thrive in the society should have been done away with along time ago, but this is not the case. Minority discriminations based of cultural beliefs are so evident in many circles of life especially in the Islamic religious societies. Religious decimation against the minority and gender discrimination are so pronounced in Muslim societies. The minority groups continue to encounter massive challenges in an attempt to fit in these societies.

The Saudi Arabia Kingdom which is our case study is a monarchy run in accordance with Islamic religious ethics. The constitution of this monarchy is based on Sharia form the Quran. The greatest percentage of Saudi's citizens is Muslims hence all the rest fall under the category of minority group subject to various minority discriminations. Women in the society from time immemorial receive a different perception and treatment by the society. This is based on the belief that they are a weaker sex; the Islamic nations have not been left behind in unequal treatment of women. The paper has outlined the various religious and gender discriminations especially in Islamic based states using the case study of Saudi Arabia.

References

Abir, M. (1993). Saudi Arabia: government, society, and the Gulf crisis. New York, NY: Routledge.

Benton, A. J. (2007). Are Your Genes Protected: Federal Legislation and Genetic Discrimination: *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice*, Iowa City, 10(2), 285-311.

Federal Research Division. (2004). Saudi Arabia A Country Study. Montana: Kessinger Publishing.

FIDH and the Ligue de Défense des Droits de l'Homme en Iran. (2003). Discrimination against religious minorities in Iran, Paris – France. Retrieved on January 23, 2010 from: <http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/ir0108a.pdf>

Hyde, J. S. (2005) “ The Gender Similarities Hypothesis”, *American Psychologist*, (International Labor Conference); 96th session, I (B). Publisher International Labor Organization.

International Labor Office, (2007), *Equality at work: tackling the challenges: global report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*

International Labor Office Series Volume 91; Volume 96 of Report (International Labor Conference) Report. Publisher International Labor Organization.

Kline, J. (2005). *Ethics for international business: decision making in a global political economy*. New York, NY: Routledge.

<https://assignbuster.com/gender-and-religious-discrimination-in-islamic-countries/>

Saudi Arabian Government and Law. Retrieved on January 23, 2010 from:
http://www.jeansasson.com/law_and_government.htm

Tofilon, L. (2005). Masters of Discrimination: Augusta National Golf Club, Freedom of Association, and Gender Equality in Golf. *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice*. Iowa City: Fall, 9(1), 189-20.

Traiman, L. (2006). Guidelines but No Guidance: GaySpermBank.com vs. FDA. *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice*. Iowa City: Spring, 9(3), 613-623.

U. S. Glass Ceiling Commission. (1995). “ Glass Ceiling Commission – A Solid Investment: Making Full Use of the Nation’s Human Capital A Solid Investment:”

Making Full Use of the Nation’s Human Capital. Retrieved on January 23, 2010 from: http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1117&context=key_workplace

United Nations Cyber School-Bus. (2010). What is discrimination? Retrieved on January 23, 2010 from: http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/discrim/id_8_ud_print.asp